

The Chairman
Health and Community Services
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane
Q4000
hcsc@parliament.qld.gov.au

Submission on the Nature Conservation Act 1992 proposed amendments

I wish to express my concern about proposed changes to the nature of conservation protection in Queensland contained in these amendments.

Object of the Act

The primary goal of a nature conservation act should be the conservation of nature. It is essential this be retained as the object of the Act. It is inappropriate to include recreational and commercial activities in addition to the conservation of nature in the object of the Act. Once other outcomes are listed along with the conservation of nature this will lead to irrevocable changes in our National Park estate.

Cardinal Principle of national parks

Protection of our natural environment is of utmost importance to maintaining our native habitats to conserve the biodiversity of our native fauna and flora. National parks currently offer the highest form of protection and this should continue.

It is essential to support in practice the Cardinal Principle for national parks. If the Act is altered to allow more social and commercial use of national parks then the principle of protection will be gradually reduced. National parks provide special protection for the wildlife and this is how it should remain with the human footprint treading lightly within our national parks.

Management Plans

It is inadequate to propose management plans be developed for a few iconic national parks of Queensland with other required planning being much less rigorous, possibly in the form of management statements for many parks. National park management plans are very important to ensure continued protection of the national parks. It should remain as now, that most national parks are required to have a management plan put in place soon after their dedication.

Public consultation

A consultative attitude towards the protection of the whole National Park estate is essential. It is proposed that management plans will now have only one period of public consultation. It is important to have public input into management statements and amendments to all existing management plans as well.

Activities which may adversely affect the cardinal principle of national parks

Management plans should be mandatory for any activity that may potentially affect the nature conservation values of a national park. There should be strict criteria by which activities must abide and if there is any possibility an activity may cause harm to the integrity of the natural environment it should be rejected in line with the Cardinal Principle.

An allowable activity should have an appropriate management plan in place before the activity commences. Key values of a park must be expressly known and assessment made against such criteria.

Reduction in number of tenure categories

The proposed reduction in the number of tenure categories is of concern. Management principles may become clouded when areas with very different conservation values are put into the same category. This can lead to the management operating to the lowest denominator.

Cattle grazing

Cattle grazing should not be allowed in national parks.

Carol Muller

Little Mountain
Q4551.
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